

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJ: PRC FEATURES TOMB OF CH'IN SHIH HUANG

SUMMARY: OVER THE PAST WEEK LOCAL HONG KONG PUBLICATIONS HAVE REPLAYED NCNA ACCOUNTS OF ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS NEAR THE BOMB OF CHINA'S FIRST EMPEROR, CH'IN SHIH HUANG. GIVEN THE COMMON ANALOGY DRAWN BETWEEN THE FIRST EMPEROR AND MAO, ALONG WITH MAO'S OBVIOUSLY DECLINING HEALTH, WE FEEL IT POSSIBLE THAT THERE COULD BE MORE THAN ARCHEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO FOCUSING ON THAT TOMB AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY

1. ON 10JULY NCNA REPORTED THE DISCOVERY OF SEVERAL LIFE-SIZE POTTERY WARRIOR FIGURES ALONG WITH THEIR HORSES AND OTHER ARTIFACTS AT A NEW EXCAVATION SITE DISCOVERED LAST YEAR IN SHENSI PROVINCE, JUST EAST OF THE FAMOUS TOMB OF CH'IN SHIH HUNAG, CHINA'S FIRST GREAT EMPEROR WHO DIED IN 207 B.C. THIS STORY IS PICKED UP IN HONG KONG'S PRC-OWNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TA KUNG PAO ON 11 JULY WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT THE DISCOVERY

SHOULD REFUTE LIN PIAO AND SOVIET SLANDER AGAINST CH'IN AS A DESTROYER OF CULTURE. THE 17 JULY ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPLEMENT OF TA KUNG PAO RUNS THE STORY TOO AND CARRIES INSERT PICTURES SHOWING THE TOMB OF CH'IN SHIH HUANG.

2. THE SUPPLEMENT ALSO CARRIES AN ARTICLE BY CHEN FAN CURIOUSLY ENTITLED "EMPEROR CH'IN'S BODYGUARDS". LIKE THE OTHER PRESS COMMENTARY, IT STRESSES THE HIGH TECHNICAL QUALITY OF THE POTTERY FIGURES IN "MARSHAL STANCE AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS" AND ESTIMATES THAT WHEN EXCAVATION IS COMPLETED THERE MAY BE 6000 FIGURES IN ALL. THE ARTICLE DOES NOT ACTUALLY IDENTIFY THE POTTERY WARRIORS AS THE "EMPEROR'S BODYGUARDS" BUT CONCLUDES WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT THESE FINDINGS SHOULD RAISE THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THEY ARE NOT "POSITIVE PROOF THAT HUMAN FUNERAL SACRIFICES HAD BEEN TOTALLY ABOLISHED AT THE TIME OF CH'IN".

3. THROUGHOUT THE ANTI-CONFUCIUS, ANTI-LIN PIAO CAMPAIGN, PRC MEDIA WAS AT PAINS TO PORTRAY CH'IN SHIH HUANG AS A GREAT AND PROGRESSIVE EMPEROR, IN PART TO REBUT ALLEGED SOVIET AND LIN PIAO SLANDER--- AND THE COMMONPLACE CONCEPTION THAT CH'IN WAS ONE OF THE CRUELLEST TYRANTS IN WORLD HISTORY. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POTTERY FIGURES IN A DEFENSIVE CONTEXT THEN, WOULD BE THAT ACTUALLY ONLY CERAMIC LIKENESSES OF THE FIRST EMPEROR'S LOYAL FOLLOWERS HAD BEEN ENTOMBED WITH HIM. TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS OF CH'IN SHIH HUANG'S BURIAL RITE HAVE GENERALLY OFFERED A BLOODIER VERSION. HAN DYNASTY HISTORIAN SSU-MA CHIEN'S FAMOUS RECORDS OF THE HISTORIAN TELLS OF THE ELABORATE TREASURES IN THE GREAT TOMB, BUT IT ALSO REPORTED THAT ALL THE "EMPEROR'S LADIES" WHO HAD NOT BORN HIM SONS WERE BURIED WITH HIM; ALL ARTISANS AND LABORERS WHO WORKED INSIDE THE TOMB WERE SEALED IN --BURIED ALIVE. SSU-MA CHIEN ALSO RECORDS THE FACT THAT SHORTLY AFTER THE DEATH OF THE FIRST EMPEROR, HIS YOUNG SUCCESSOR QUICKLY DISPOSED OF "PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS AND MILITARY TRIBUNES" AND "SENTENCED" THE CHIEF MINISTERS AND PRINCES TO DEATH TO PRE-EMPT ANY PLOTS THOSE LOYAL TO THE FIRST EMPEROR MAY HAVE HAD IN MIND. MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY WERE "INTIMIDATED" AND DID NOTHING; "THE COMMON PEOPLE WERE AFRAID". A PALACE BLOODBATH QUICKLY FOLLOWED AND THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHOLE OF THE CH'IN EMPIRE COLLAPSED.

4. COMMENT: PERHAPS THERE IS NOTHING MORE THAN ARCHEOLOGY TO THE CURRENT ACCOUNT OF THE ANCIENT TOMB BUT WITH PERSISTING RUMORS OF MAO'S FRAIL HEALTH AND WITH A LONG-ESTABLISHED PATTERN OF VIEWING MAO IN TERMS OF CH'IN SHIH HUANG, WE WONDER THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE A RIPPLE OF CONSTERNATION AMONG MAO'S CLOSE ADVISORS AND RETAINERS WHEN

THE ARCHEOLOGISTS NOW WANT TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER
THE EMPEROR'S MEN -- AND LADIES--- WERE BURIED
LITERALLY OR FIGURATIVELY ALONG WITH THE EMPEROR.
CROSS

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